DANCE NOTATION: PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE

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Dance notation is the study of how to translate movement, a three-dimensional form of communication, into a two-dimensional format so that it might be later recreated with accuracy. In this process, movement translation proves challenging as elements such as time, space, direction, and level must be continuously clarified. Throughout time, since the advent of dance as a social institution, notational systems have been created in order to preserve movements ranging from salutary gestures to national folk dances. By studying the history of dance notation (and its molding influences), one studies the specific challenges brought to the process of recording dance as it evolved into the high art form that it is undisputedly recognized as. In the present, notation systems inspire a general lack of enthusiasm within the dance community, resulting from the invention of film. The intensive labor required for notation being no longer the only option of recording choreography is less attractive to most dance professionals. There are those, however, in and outside of the dance community who still adamantly believe in the value of studying movement using notation. Motion theorists, dance historians, teachers, physical therapists, anthropologists, and choreographers, who attempt to understand the ‘grammar’ of movement as a language, all use dance notation as a tool to various ends. The present trend of using notation as a tool promises to exponentially increase in the future as more fields use emerging technology to blend movement collection techniques with advancement of computers with diverse and exciting results.

Therefore with the quest for deeper understanding of dance notation, I propose to present an overview of the subject. By exploring its history, understanding its value in today’s world, and peering into its diverse future, I hope to gain insights from the great theorists of dance and movement of the different aspects and potential benefits of translating movement with notation.